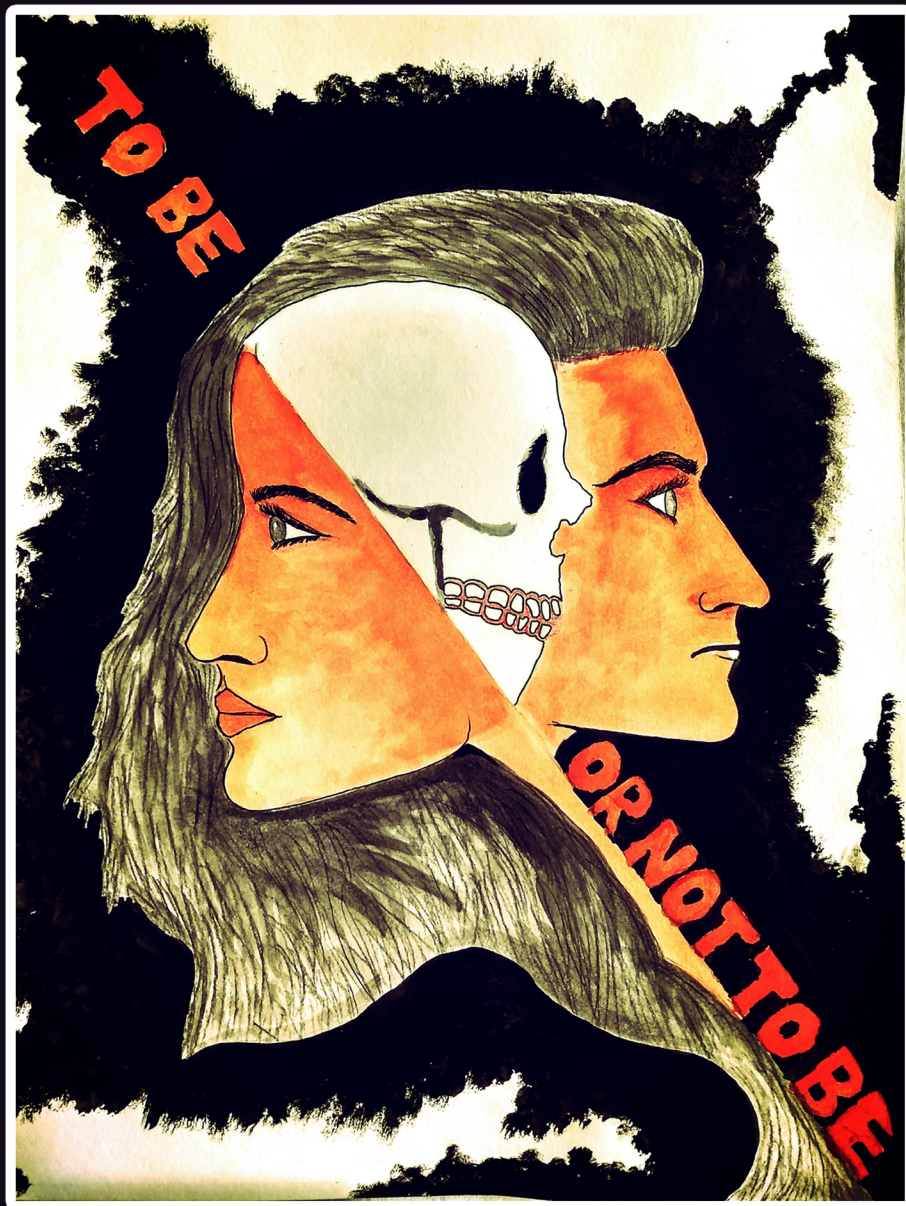


A PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET

DR. JENNY RATHOD





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A PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET

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Message from the Desk of Editor

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome all to explore/publish/ comment in/on our journal, The International Journal of Indian Psychology (IJIP). There are a lot of challenges which the growing psychological face in the realms of basic necessities in life. Psychological thoughts can play a very distinct role in bringing about this change. One of the key objectives of research should be its usability and application. This journal attempts to document and spark a debate on the research focused on psychological research and ideas in context of emerging geographies. The sectors could range from psychological education and improvement, mental health, environmental issues and solution, health care and medicine and psychological related areas. The key focus would however be the emerging sectors and research which discusses application and usability in social or health context.

We intended to publish case reports, review articles, with main focus on original research articles. Over objective is to reach all the psychological practitioners, who have knowledge and interest but have no time to record the interesting cases, research activities and new innovative procedures which helps us in updating our knowledge and improving our treatment.

Finally, I would like to thank RED'SHINE International Publications, for this keepsake, and my editorial team, technical team, designing team, promoting team, indexing team, authors and well wishers, who are promoting this journal. With these words, I conclude and promise that the standards policies will be maintained. We hope that the research featured here sets up many new milestones. I look forward to make this endeavour very meaningful.

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ABSTRACT :

Shakespeare's play Hamlet is known for its complexity and psychological depth. It has been seen as the greatest riddle in world literature over the ages. It has been frequently referred to as the Modern Sphinx of literature or even as the Mona Lisa of literature. The reason for this compelling complexity of the play lies in the portrayal of its protagonist., Prince Hamlet of Denmark. Hamlet has been interpreted as a baffling tragic hero by critics and scholar in terms of his psychological intricacies. He has been subjected to close scrutiny for his state of mind, his indecisiveness, his real or feigned madness. Shakesperean critics have given various interpretations of the Hamlet through the ages. But the most interesting interpretations of Hamlet have been made by renowned psychologists such as Sigmund Freud, Ernest Jones and other Freudian and post- Freudian psychologists. This study is an attempt to examine the theories put forward by some of these psychoanalytic critics and analyse the character of Hamlet through the psychoanalytic lens. The theory of the Oedipus complex, the Orestes Complex, the existence of the id, the ego and the super ego, the claims of the existence of Hamlet's dark desires in his unconscious mind, his state of melancholy and apparent or real madness have been analysed in this study. The attempt is to show that though these theories offer fresh and modern perspectives on the play, no theory can fully explain the mystery that lies at the heart of the play or do justice to the character of Hamlet. The play is a great work of art and a psychological interpretation of the play does not in any way attempt to destroy the beauty of this work of Art. Rather it serves to the enrich the readers through its interesting explorations of the psyche of Hamlet. And though psychology as a field of study did not exist during the time of Shakespeare, it has been established beyond any doubt that Shakespeare himself was one of the greatest psychologists in his understanding of the depths of human nature, its intricacies and complexities.

Keywords : *Psychoanalysis, The Oedipus Complex, The Orestes Complex, Eros, Thanatos, Id, Ego, Super Ego, Melancholy, Depression, Madness, Guilt, Indecisiveness, Appearance, Reality, Conflict, Tragedy, Adultery, Incest, Murder, Revenge, Repression*

INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare's Hamlet is a play that has intrigued readers and critics over the ages for its complexity and its psychological insight especially in the depiction of its central character Hamlet. It is more than just a revenge play. It invites close analysis for the psychological intricacies involved in the portrayal of Hamlet's state of mind. Apart from the psychological make-up of Hamlet's character, his indecisiveness, his madness, what really interests the reader is his relationship with his mother. There are psychoanalytical studies which opine that Hamlet has an Oedipus Complex in relation to his mother.

Freudian Psychoanalysis of Hamlet

It was Sigmund Freud who developed the theory of the Oedipus Complex, whereby the male infant conceives the desire to eliminate his father and become the sexual partner of his mother. One of the fundamental tenets of Freudian psychology is that Oedipal feelings are common to all male children.

It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father. Our dreams convince us that that is so. King Oedipus, who slew his father Laius and married his mother Jocasta, merely shows us the fulfillment of our own childhood wishes...

Here is one in whom these primeval wishes of our childhood have been fulfilled. While the poet, as he unravels the past, brings to light the guilt of Oedipus, he is at the same time compelling us to recognize our own inner minds, in which those same impulses, though suppressed, are still to be found. - Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, tr. James Strachey, Avon, N.Y. 1965. p.296.

Freud firmly believed in the existence of the Oedipus Complex. According to him the presence of this complex from individual to individual differs only in terms of degree. Individuals differ in how they are able to handle these feelings. However, the desire to kill one's father and have sexual relations with one's own mother are clearly unacceptable in society, and therefore this innate urge is either repressed or sublimated. Repression or inhibition leads to psychological illness.

On surface, Hamlet appears to have the highest regard for his father and a deep sense of loyalty towards him which motivates him to seek revenge for his murder. Freud explains the difference between an innate psychological urge and the accepted range of its expression in civilized society with the notion of repression. The fact that Hamlet's innate desire is not obviously visible in the play is due to his ability to repress it. According to Freud, civilization advances itself through repression.

Another of the great creations of tragic poetry, Shakespeare's Hamlet, has its roots in the same soil as Oedipus Rex. But the changed treatment of the same material reveals the whole difference in the mental life of these two widely separated epochs of civilization: the secular advance of repression in the emotional life of mankind. In the Oedipus the child's wishful

fantasy that underlies it is brought into the open and realized as it would be in a dream. In Hamlet it remains repressed; and - just as in the case of neurosis -- we only learn of its existence from it's inhibiting consequences. - Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, tr. James Strachey, Avon, N.Y. 1965. p.298

Hamlet has clearly repressed all feelings of hatred for his father and sexual feelings for his mother. He has developed inhibitions which in the long run lead to mental illness. It's a situation where the greater the Oedipal urge, the greater the need to repress it and the greater the repression, the greater the risk of mental illness.

We note -- if the Elizabethan language is translated into modern English -- the symptoms of dejection, refusal of food, insomnia, crazy behavior, fits of delirium, and finally raving madness; Hamlet's poignant parting words to Polonius ("except my life", etc.) cannot mean other than a craving for death. These are undoubtedly suggestive of certain forms of melancholia, and the likeness to manic-depressive insanity, of which melancholia is now known to be a part, is completed by the occurrence of attacks of great excitement that would nowadays be called "hypomanic", of which Dover Wilson counts no fewer than eight. – Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus*, W.W.Norton, NY 1976. p.22.

It is these Oedipal feelings which create a deep sense of guilt and revulsion towards women in general in Hamlet.

Feelings which once, in the infancy of long ago, were pleasurable desires can now, because of his repressions, only fill him with repulsion... - Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus*, W.W.Norton, NY 1976. p.82.

Ernest Jones then goes on to depict how repression leads to hostile behavior and misogyny in Hamlet.

When sexual repression is highly pronounced, as with Hamlet, then both types of women are felt to be hostile: the pure one out of resentment at her repulses, the sensual one out of the temptation she offers to plunge into guiltiness. Misogyny, as in the play, is the inevitable result. - Jones. p. 86

Freudian critics have studied at length Hamlet's procrastination, his seeming delay in avenging his father's murder, keeping in mind the theory of the Oedipus complex and the feelings of guilt and repression that go along with it. According to them, there are reasons for this delay in killing Claudius which are deeply buried in his sub-conscious mind. These critics opine that Claudius is a living emblem of Hamlet's own Oedipal desires. He has actually killed his father and is sleeping with his mother.

Hamlet's second guilty wish had thus also been realized by his uncle, namely to procure the fulfilment of the first -- the possession of the mother -- by a personal deed, in fact by murder of the father. - Jones. p.83.

According to Freud, Hamlet's inability to take a decision on killing Claudius is connected to his own deeper association with him. Claudius stands before him as a living representation of his own repressed childhood fantasies and to kill him would be like killing a part of his own self that he already loathes and cannot face.

Hamlet is able to do anything -- except take vengeance on the man who did away with his father and took that father's place with his mother, the man who shows him the repressed wishes of his own childhood realized. Thus the loathing which should drive him on to revenge is replaced in him by self-reproaches, by scruples of conscience, which remind him that he himself is literally no better than the sinner whom he is to punish. Here I have translated into conscious terms what was bound to remain unconscious in Hamlet's mind....

The distaste for sexuality expressed by Hamlet in his conversation with Ophelia fits in very well with this. - Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, tr. James Strachey, Avon, N.Y. 1965. p.299.

Freudian solution to what is referred to as the Problem of Hamlet has to do with not only the delay in killing Claudius but also with the actual murder of his mother. The delay can end only when mother is dead. Hamlet is free to act once the cause of his repressed guilt is eliminated and he swiftly kills Claudius.

In reality, his uncle incorporates the deepest and most buried part of his own personality, so that he cannot kill him without also killing himself. This solution, one closely akin to what Freud has shown to be the motive of suicide in melancholia, is actually the one that Hamlet finally adopts... Only when he has made the final sacrifice and brought himself to the door of death is he free to fulfil his duty, to avenge his father, and to slay his other self -- his uncle. - Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus*, W.W.Norton, N.Y. 1976. p.88.

There are two moments in the play when he is nearest to murder, and it is noteworthy that in both the impulse has been dissociated from the unbearable idea of incest. The second is when he actually kills the King, when the Queen is already dead and lost to him for ever, so that his conscience is free of an ulterior motive for the murder. - Jones. p.89.

Ernest Jones and his analysis of Hamlet

Ernest Jones essay "The Oedipus Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery" was first published in *The American Journal of Psychology* in January of 1910. It was published in German the following year as a monogram, and then revised and expanded in 1923 when it appeared under the title "A Psycho-Analytic Study of Hamlet" as the first chapter in Jones' book, *Essays in Applied Psycho-Analysis*. It was further revised and extended into Jones' *Hamlet and Oedipus* (1949), a book which was almost immediately taken to be the expression of the official Freudian position on *Hamlet*, largely due to Jones' closeness to Freud himself, both as a disciple and as his official biographer.

Moreover, both Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones have based their interpretation of Hamlet on the theory that the central issue in the play is Hamlet's indecisiveness and his hesitation in killing Claudius. They assume that there has to be a deep rooted hidden cause for this hesitation. In fact Sigmund Freud refers to this issue as 'the Problem of Hamlet', as though it were the only important issue in the play.

The play is built up on Hamlet's hesitations over fulfilling the task of revenge that is assigned to him; but its text offers no reasons or motives for these hesitations and an immense variety of attempts at interpreting them have failed to produce a result. According to the view which was originated by Goethe and is still the prevailing one today, Hamlet represents the type of man whose power of direct action is paralyzed by and excessive development of his intellect.
- Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, tr. James Strachey, Avon, N.Y. 1965. p.298.

In the early days of psychology, Freudian analysts were a community by themselves and set themselves apart from the other psychologists. It is not surprising that a lot of support of the interpretation of Hamlet by Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones came from the psychoanalysts and much of the opposition came from people who were not of that community.

Other Psychological Interpretations Of Hamlet

In his book, *The Design Within*, M.D. Faber speaks of this dichotomy in the interpretation of the character of Hamlet as follows:

From quarters inhabited by analysts and by critics with psychoanalytic leanings came numerous expressions of belief and gratitude: The mystery had been solved and hats off to those who had solved it. From literary circles, however, came a great many statements of disbelief and shock, as well as critical assaults that aimed at pointing up the erroneousness of regarding Hamlet in the Freud-Jones manner. - MD Faber, *The Design Within*, Science House, N.Y.. 1970. p.111.

Faber further outlines the opposition that came from other Freudian analysts. Frederic Wertham, a psychoanalyst himself, led the attack on Freud's interpretation.

Hamlet expresses in the play his great love and admiration for his father. That this feeling may be accompanied by ambivalence must be conceded. But there is no evidence of this hostility against the real father in the text, and certainly no evidence either in the text or in the whole psychological setting of the story, that this assumed hostility is so strong and far-reaching that it can serve as the main explanation. - Frederic Wertham, "Critique of Freud's Interpretation of Hamlet" in MD Faber, *The Design Within*, Science House, N.Y.. 1970. p.114.

In the long run arguments for and against came to be centred around the willingness to accept the basic tenet, i.e. the universality of the Oedipus Complex. The Freudian stand was that the greater the Oedipal wish, the greater the effort to suppress. There is no evidence in the play that Hamlet harboured the wish to kill his father. Freudians believe that this in itself proof of the existence of such a desire and how thoroughly it is repressed. Ultimately it all boils down

to how totally one accepts this doctrine. Either you accept in totality the universality of the Oedipus Complex or you do not accept it at all.

Frederic Wertham's objection to Freud's interpretation of Hamlet amounts to an attack on the universal application of the Oedipus complex. Wertham suggests that the case of Hamlet might be an exception to the rule

The real basis of Freud's interpretation is his theory that the Oedipus complex is a universal, biological, normal, unavoidable inheritance of the human race. In the very case of Hamlet, it can be demonstrated -- and for the first time in a concrete case analyzed by Freud -- that this theory has to be modified. - Frederic Wertham, "Critique of Freud's Interpretation of Hamlet" in M.D. Faber, *The Design Within*, Science House, N.Y.. 1970. p.114

Wertham then goes on to give an account of a real case where a patient whose circumstances were similar to that of Hamlet in the sense that after his father's death his mother had an affair with his uncle. And unlike Hamlet, the patient did not hesitate or procrastinate but immediately stabbed his mother to death in a fit of rage. Wertham therefore suggests that the Orestes complex is a more appropriate explanation of Hamlet's situation. And this is how Wertham describes the Orestes complex.

This variety of parent complex which centers on the mother, and more specifically on hostility toward her, can be designated as the Orestes complex. Orestes killed his mother Clytemnestra and her lover, his father's kinsman, Aegisthus. The legend of Orestes, which historically marks a turning point in the social position of the mother, has far more similarity to the story of Hamlet than has the story of Oedipus. - Frederic Wertham, "Critique of Freud's Interpretation of Hamlet" in MD Faber, *The Design Within*, Science House, NY 1970. p.120.

The one person in the play who believes that Hamlet is likely to murder her is none other than Gertrude herself. The ghost of Hamlet's father also fears that Hamlet might harm his mother and is deeply concerned about keeping her safe from Hamlet. Hamlet himself is worried that he might end up doing the worst. He does not want the soul of Nero to enter his bosom.

*Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business at the day
Would quake to look on: soft, now to my mother -
O heart, lose not thy nature, let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom,
Let me be cruel not unnatural.
I will speak daggers to her, but use none.* - (III.ii.394)

Freud assumes that Hamlet is unable to tolerate the presence of his mother because of his repressed feelings and his guilt. The allusion to Nero has a significance. Nero is supposed to have slept with his mother and then murdered her out of a sense of guilt. So the question is

that did Hamlet suffer from the Oedipus Complex or the Orestes Complex ?. Either way, the core issue that needs to be addressed in a psychoanalytic interpretation of Hamlet is that his wrath would have been more appropriately targeted towards his mother rather than his father.

Eros and Thanatos in Hamlet

One reason why revenge tragedies were popular in Shakespeare's culture and are still popular in our own, is that revenge is profoundly disturbing; for an audience the projection of revenge is extremely therapeutic. Tragi-comedies end on a note of forgiveness, reconciliation and renewal. Revenge tragedies are given over to more primitive forms of passion, conflict and aggression. They are Death- oriented rather than Life- oriented. Hamlet is a supreme example of how Eros is ultimately dominated by Death, how the ego is completely destroyed by the Super Ego. Guilt and a destructive rage that goes with it are the defining traits of Hamlet's character. The Super Ego which compels Hamlet to destroy other people and eventually himself out of feelings of an unconscious or sub-conscious sense of guilt and unrelenting rage is the most significant component of a psychological interpretation of the play. It is the denial of Eros and the destructive elements of all his relationships which lead to his tragic downfall. There are critics who believe that there are two Freudian concepts which Shakespeare has dramatized in the tragedy of Hamlet : the Defusion of the instinct of Eros i.e. Love and the instinct of Thanatos i.e. Death. The aggression propelled by the Super Ego is also related to the death instinct. According to Freud these two instincts are usually combined and intermingled. Rarely do they appear in isolation. Eros usually neutralizes aggression and the ego tends to displace it to some other object or to sublimate it. Unfortunately in the case of Hamlet none of these things occur and the ego is completely subjugated by the super ego leading to the tragic denouement with its corresponding elements of hatred and hostility, failure to love and subsequent suffering. The failure of Eros results in the complete defusion or separation of the two instincts leading to the dominance of the Death instinct whose agency is the aggressive Super ego. According to Freud, aggression leads to destructive behavior towards other people and other things and eventually leads to self destruction. After the dual instincts of Eros and Thanatos are separated, the ego can no longer control the aggression of the super ego which ultimately unleashes cruelty and violence which are a marked feature of revenge tragedies such as Hamlet.

The Super Ego is an element of the psyche which idealizes the state of the world and perceives it as it ought to be and not really as it is. Freud also believed that the Super Ego was yet another aspect of the Death instinct in its aggressive need to inflict punishment. When the ideal failed, the cruelty and aggression would come to the fore leading to murder or suicide, abuse of other people or self- abuse. According to Freud, the roots of the Super Ego lie in the unconscious Oedipal desires and lack of love and it is further influenced by societal impact in terms of education, religion and morality. Edith Jacobson claims that the super ego actually emerges from the taboos of patricide, matricide and incest. According to her, 'there is a tremendous step between the simple moral logic of castration fear, fear of punishment and hope of reward, to the abstract moral level of a superego which has expanded from the taboo

of incest and murder to a set of impersonal, ethical principles and regulations for human behaviour.' (Shakespearean Criticism: Hamlet (Vol. 44) - Psychoanalytic Interpretations Tragic Alternatives: Eros and Superego Aggression

Jean Laplanche sees the death instinct as an internalization of conflict and discord. The death instinct represents the obliteration of the ego by the super ego. It affects the subject's personal relationships and ultimately leads to a narcissistic withdrawal from the world. In other words, the person in whom the death instinct overpowers the life instinct, has an extremely weakened ego, a terribly low self-esteem and in order to regain his or her self esteem and self confidence, the person withdraws from the world in a narcissistic way. This is particularly true of people who have suffered failure in love. If one opines of Eros as a life-preserving instinct and Thanatos as the life-denying instinct, then for the aggressive Super Ego which is allied to the death instinct, the object of love becomes the means by which destructive and violent instincts are unleashed in a person. Hamlet is a supreme illustration of this phenomenon. Shakespeare has frequently presented over-powering sexual attraction as a destructive force. The perception of the beloved by the protagonist is flawed or his family relationships are on the whole destructive leading to aggression and self abuse. Hamlet's tragic flaw is his inability to survive betrayal in love, the object of love being his mother, leading to his tragic downfall. The concept of narcissism is also relevant here. The aim of the narcissist is to be loved and the narcissistic lover is completely and totally dependent on his beloved for reciprocation of a similar kind of love. And if the beloved betrays the lover in this sense, his self esteem is terribly affected and he experiences deep pain and self pity. However unlike an idealistic lover, the narcissistic lover does not hate himself. Rather, he withdraws into himself even more, going back to the state where he loved only himself. The idealistic lover, on the other hand, hates himself and feels worthless, and is propelled by his super ego to thoughts of murder and suicide.

There has been tremendous opposition to Freud's concept of the death instinct primarily because we are unable to accept our own destructive and violent instincts. The aggressive aspect of the super ego projects itself in the world at large and is generally targeted towards parents, the laws of society and political suppression. The function of the super ego is to repress and thereby induce feelings of guilt. During moments of temporary lifting of repression, the subject suffers from extreme panic and anxiety. One interpretation of *Hamlet* is that the Ghost of his father represents his own unrepressed feelings of hostility towards his father and it is this hostility which he then projects in the form of revengeful hatred for his uncle Claudius, his mother Gertrude and his beloved Ophelia. The thoughts expressed by him are revengeful, sadistic and self destructive. Hamlet's soliloquies are also representations of the conflicts caused by the Super ego, to live or to die, to take revenge or not to act, to honour his duty towards his father or to think only about himself. On the one hand, Hamlet is ashamed of the promise he made to his father that he would take revenge. On the other hand, he is also ashamed of himself for his inability to take any action. Eleanor Prosser suggests that it is possible that the Ghost is a projection of Hamlet's own repressed feelings of hostility towards his father which then becomes a projection of his hatred for his uncle Claudius. The command to kill Claudius is obviously more acceptable since it comes from an externalized

source. The theory of the Oedipus complex does seem applicable here. Secretly Hamlet has always harboured strong feelings of hostility towards his father combined with a deep sexual attraction for his mother. The command made by the Ghost, which is actually nothing but a projection of his own repressed feelings makes it possible for him to channelize these feelings into a more acceptable hatred for his uncle- father and aunt-mother. The father-son-mother conflict lies at the heart of the play. The play deals with the crisis that Hamlet faces when the ghost of his murdered father appears before him commanding him to take revenge against his uncle Claudius and rescue his mother Gertrude from an incestuous marriage. Initially Hamlet responds with great readiness to carry out the command. Then he experiences great doubt and conflict leading to reluctance and hesitation in carrying out the command. Hamlet struggles very hard to identify with his father's command and revenge is socially acceptable in the cultural construct. But there are moral, ethical and psychological conflicts that he faces which cause hesitation and delay in taking revenge. The theme of revenge is represented by Shakespeare through psychological ambiguities and motives. To begin with, the projection of the Ghost allows him to express his deep-rooted feelings of hatred for his uncle with the subsequent desire to kill him. The terrible revelations that the ghost makes about murder, adultery and incest serve to justify his own loathing for his uncle who seduces with traitorous gifts his mother who appears to be virtuous on surface. The revelations also serve to affirm his own intense feelings towards his mother. He is obsessed with his mother in the same way that his father was. It is a cursed love triangle with a psychological twist.

The play within the play. 'The Mouse Trap', directed and managed by Hamlet himself is an externalization of Hamlet's own conflict and thoughts about revenge through the medium of the stage. The play involves the enacting of the entire scenario of the murder of Gonzago which uncannily resembles the murder of his own father.

*I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle
(II. ii. 590-2)*

Hamlet is particularly jubilant about the ending of the play in his capacity as director, actor and audience because he feels that through the play, he has already been successful in taking revenge. The aggression that he feels finds an outlet or a kind of displacement through the play. It becomes a medium for making public the entire truth of his father's murder from the beginning to the end.

The Ghost is the means of dramatizing Hamlet's own anxieties and deep rooted fears, his hatred of his uncle Claudius and his desire to kill the man who has seduced his mother and murdered his father. The foul language that the Ghost uses to describe Gertrude's lustful sexuality serves as fuel to Hamlet to excite his own sexual fantasies about his mother. There is not much evidence in the play to show that Gertrude is as vilely sexual as her husband and her son have described her. The Ghost, in fact, is using the same tactics that Iago had used against Othello to drive him mad with jealousy and loathing. Critics might object that the

Ghost urges Hamlet to leave his mother alone but he knows that it is not possible to control or roll back what he has unleashed.

In the famous closet scene between mother and son, Hamlet unravels his own conflicting feelings about his mother. The Oedipal nature of his desires is clearly visible in this scene.

And this psycho-analytic interpretation of the relationship between Hamlet and his mother has been frequently incorporated into modern productions of the play. It is very obvious that Hamlet both loves and hates his mother at the same time. The closet scene becomes an outlet of his pent- up hatred and violent destructiveness. He subjects his mother to the same verbal cruelty that he later also directs towards Ophelia. This scene reveals very clearly that there is no going back for Hamlet to happier times. There is no redemption or peace for him anymore. He is irretrievably trapped in a parental relationship involving adultery, murder and incest. Moreover he has promised the Ghost of his father to take revenge for this wrong that he will take responsibility to wipe out this evil. And yet Hamlet is unable to act on the promise given to his father because there are complex familial relationships involved, especially his feelings for his mother. He dare not question the morality of taking revenge for his father's murder .because that would be like a questioning of his father's authority. But he has his own doubts about the morality involved in seeing murder as a solution to a previous murder. In an effort to deal with these internal conflicts, Hamlet projects his own aggression and destructive feelings onto other people, making him resort to extreme verbal violence and cruelty in his treatment of his mother and Ophelia.

There are critics like Barber and Wheeler who believe that Hamlet's extreme hostility is his defence mechanism against a morally corrupt world. His aggression finds an outlet through violent destructiveness in the closet and nunnery scenes. The command to take revenge given by the Ghost is in itself a command given to turn love into hatred. In a way it is a command from the super ego of the idealized father to perpetrate revenge against the hate figure of Claudius, whom he refers to as a heap of garbage, 'that nasty sty' (III. iv. 94). Initially the command incites Hamlet's own super ego to become keeper of his mother's conscience and that of his uncle but his failure to kill Claudius and avenge his father fills him with despair and self-loathing. Moreover his attempts to take revenge result in the accidental killing of Polonius and the tragic suicide of Ophelia. Furthermore his mother continues to sleep with Claudius, causing extreme agony to Hamlet. He is driven mad by the images of his mother sleeping between 'incestuous sheets'(i.ii.157). His despair and hopelessness drive him to thoughts of ending his own life, to take revenge upon himself by destroying himself. It is an anguished grief-stricken Hamlet, who stands within the open grave of Ophelia, crying that he should be buried along with her. It's a classic case of how the self-abusive super ego annihilated his ego. Hamlet completely collapses under the weight of so much self hatred and the pain and agony caused by his sense of failure. He deliberately submits himself to a duel with Laertes. The conflict between the life instinct and the death instinct leads to the triumph of the death instinct leading to a tragic self-sacrifice. The sense of guilt and the need for self-punishment caused by the super ego are too strong for the ego to control. In normal life, these kind of feelings find an expression through displacement and sublimation. In this kind of a

tragedy, the protagonist is unable to defend himself against the destructive impact of the super ego through displacement or rationalization. The tragic hero is doomed to act out his sense of guilt, the guilt that he experiences for his own wrong doing and the guilt that he experiences out of his sense of failure, his inability to take the right decision and the right action. Through death, Hamlet is able to find freedom from the burden of his guilt. Shakespeare dramatizes the concept of revenge which is initially externalized and reinforced by the demands placed by destructive family relationships but ultimately ends up destroying the protagonist himself. Hamlet is an exploration of the dynamics of revenge as a hateful, violent, destructive force. The play holds a mirror up to our own deepest, darkest desires and inner conflicts, providing insight and self-enlightenment. The tragic tale of Hamlet teaches us many lessons. As he lies wounded and dying, he instructs Horatio to narrate his story to the world

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.
(V. ii. 351-4)

There are critics like Ives Hendricks who are in complete agreement with Freud's interpretation of Hamlet. According to him, the play narrates the story of incest and murder with greater disguise than Oedipus Rex. Fritz Wittels also considers that "Hamlet is the great Oedipus tragedy of the late Renaissance" (14) and points out that "Hamlet cannot love Ophelia because he has a mother fixation", cannot revenge his father, cannot fulfill the ghost's command to kill his step-father, because the murder of his father was indeed which Hamlet, himself, has long harboured as a design in his unconscious,"(15) all leading to his irresolution, his hesitancy.

Dr. Arthur Wormhoudt agrees totally with the psycho-analytic interpretations of Hamlet and also believes that at the heart of Hamlet, there lies a deep moral conflict which is the basic source of creative literary expressions. Hamlet's poetic soliloquies emerge from his moral conflict. A psychoanalytic interpretation of the character of Hamlet and of the play itself is based on the acceptance of the existence of primitive forces in the unconscious and their transformation into socially accepted behavior through sublimation. In fact psychology asserts that all creative expression is nothing but a sublimation of the conflicts, desires and fantasies buried in the Unconscious. Psychoanalysts have established the relationship between myth, dream, day dream and creative expression. Since myth and dream are related to the collective unconscious of the human race, creative art can be seen as a kind of wish fulfillment of dreams and hidden desires. Therefore all art forms can be subjected to psychoanalytic interpretation. In the case of *Hamlet*, which is generally accepted as the finest work of Shakespeare, Dr Ernest Jones believes that the play represents 'the core of Shakespeare's philosophy and outlook on life'(1) and further states that the conflict at the heart of the play is 'an echo of a similar one in Shakespeare himself to greater or lesser extent

with all men' (2) 'The intrinsic evidence from the play," he states, "decisively shows that Shakespeare projected into it his inmost soul.' (3).

Hamlet's Madness : Pretence or Reality

There is ample evidence in the play to suggest that Hamlet feigned madness in the play to confuse both Claudius and Gertrude. His avowed statement 'to put an antic disposition on' is not the only proof. In the Closet scene he makes a distinct remark that he makes to his mother that there are rumours to the effect that he has gone mad but he clarifies that he is putting on an act of madness for his own purpose.

I essentially am not in madness,
But mad in craft."
(III. iv. 187-8.)

The only people in the play who regard Hamlet as truly mad are the king himself and his allies. And even these people are filled with doubts .Polonius is the first person to call him mad. He tells Claudius , 'Your noble son is mad' (II.ii.92} However when Hamlet begins to cleverly toy with him. Polonius reports,

"Though this be madness, yet there is method in't." (II. ii.203-4.)

Claudius himself is never really convinced that Hamlet is really mad. He believes that Hamlet's madness is feigned and he employs spies to uncover the reason why Hamlet is pretending to be mad. But in the long run it serves his own evil purpose that Hamlet should be declared mad which gives him a reason to send him to England and thereby get rid of him. Ophelia's view that Hamlet has gone mad out of his love for her does not really count for the poor creature herself is completely disjointed and out of harmony with her own self. She cannot judge whether Hamlet is sane or not.

Readers and critics are divided into two groups : those who believe that Hamlet has truly gone mad and those who believe that he feigns madness. The credit goes to Shakespeare that he has created the character with such brilliance that he appears to be a real mad man.. The court of Claudius is clearly divided on the opinion. Though the Queen and Polonius firmly believed in the madness of Hamlet, Claudius himself had his own doubts . He believed that Hamlet had his own reasons for feigning madness. There are eminent psychologists on the side of Gertrude and Polonius who hold the opinion that Hamlet's madness is real. The situation is comparable to that of celebrated legal trials in which medical opinions of psychiatrists of the highest rank are divided on the question of the sanity or insanity of the man on trial.. Suppose a man who plays the part of a mad man, like Hamlet were summoned to trial. If it is determined through judicial evidence that before he had deliberately feigned an act of madness, he had never before exhibited any symptoms of insanity but on the contrary shown himself to be of a strong and stable mind and that he confided to his close friends that he has feigned madness to uncover certain secrets , it would indeed be acceptable that Hamlet is beyond any doubt sane and stable.

The perfect portrayal of the role of a mad man that Hamlet plays is an illustration of the genius of Shakespeare. In order to create an impression that he has lost his mental balance, he rushes into Ophelia's room and behaves like a mad man. Ophelia assumes that he has gone mad out of his love for her and reports this fact to her father, who in turn reports to the King. Thereby Hamlet's goal of convincing the king and others around him of his madness is accomplished. Another example of his feigned madness is his conversation with Polonius which is strange, devious and tricky. On surface he appears to be raving but actually there is a very sharp mind underneath this use of word play designed to confound and fool his enemies.

Polonius: Do you know me, my lord?

Hamlet: Excellent well. You are a fishmonger.

Polonius: Not I, my lord.

Hamlet: Then I would you was so honest a man.

Polonius: Honest, my lord?

Hamlet: Ay sir. To be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.
(II.ii.173-79)

The finest example of this feigned madness is the manner in which Hamlet utilizes the play, The Murder of Gonzago as a tool to precipitate the guilt of Claudius. Claudius's reaction to the exact re-enactment of the murder of Hamlet's father provides Hamlet with the proof that Hamlet is indeed guilty. The play that he scripts is proof that Hamlet is indeed sane and sharp.

There is also a possibility that in assuming the role of a mad man, Hamlet himself descends into insanity. The Closet Scene is a significant example of his transition from sanity to insanity. He subjects his mother Gertrude to extremely harsh verbal violence. During the conversation, he hears a sound of movement behind him. It is Polonius hiding behind the curtains and Hamlet kills him believing him to be Claudius. The killing of Polonius is an illustration of Hamlet's insanity if insanity can be defined as losing touch with reality and not being able to tell right from wrong.

Claudius banishes Hamlet fearing him for his own life, appointing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as his spies, giving instructions to them in a letter that they should kill Hamlet. Hamlet substitutes the letters and kills them instead. Thus Hamlet becomes directly responsible for the deaths of his old school friends.

ANALYZING HAMLET'S MENTAL DISORDER

There are studies which analyse in detail the particular psychological disorders that Hamlet suffers from. They interpret Hamlet's personality in the context of modern assessments, such as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM-5). Although the latest to be published was the fourth edition (DSM-IV). In the essay **Character Analysis of Hamlet : Psychological Disorders**, the critic looks at the Hamlet from the perspective of a psychiatrist examining a patient. The essay does not attempt to take away the timeless nature of this great play but nevertheless probes deeply into Hamlet's mental state.

The essayist begins by classifying Hamlet in terms of three categories : crazy, troubled or normal. The author begins by saying that Hamlet is definitely not normal in his behaviour. That leaves two other categories, crazy and normal. The author asks what exactly is crazy?. Not everyone who has mental disorders can be classified as crazy. There are events in an individual's life which combined with certain genetic factors trigger off abnormal responses in that individual. What is it to be troubled ? There is a thin line that divides being troubled and being normal. A man with deep feelings and sensitivity can be troubled but when his troubled state of mind affects other people and has harmful consequences, his behavior certainly cannot be deemed normal. From this perspective, Hamlet can be described as both crazy and troubled.

The author then goes on to assess which diagnostic criteria does Hamlet meet in order to be classified as suffering from a mental disorder.

Under Mood Disorders

1) Major Depressive Disorder

Proposed DSM-5 Criteria:

- A. Sad mood or loss of pleasure in usual activities
- B. At least five symptoms (counting sad mood and loss of pleasure):
 - Sleeping too much or too little
 - Psychomotor retardation or agitation
 - Weight loss or change in appetite
 - Loss of energy
 - Feeling of worthlessness or excessive guilt
 - Difficulty concentrating, thinking, or making decisions
 - Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide

C. Symptoms are present nearly every day, most of the day, for at least 2 weeks.

Since we have no evidence as to how Hamlet behaves on a daily basis, there are at least four of the above mentioned symptoms that he does exhibit : Sad mood or lack of pleasure, feeling of worthlessness or excessive guilt, difficulty concentrating, thinking or making decisions and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide. Five symptoms are required to meet the DSM-5 criteria. So he does not qualify to be categorized as suffering from Major Depressive Disorder.

Proposed DSM-5 Criteria for Manic and Hypomanic Episodes

- A. Distinctly elevated or irritable mood for most of the day nearly every day.
- B. Abnormally increased activity and energy.
- C. At least three of the following are noticeably changed from baseline (four if mood is irritable):
 - Increase in goal-directed activity or psychomotor agitation

- Unusual talkativeness; rapid speech
- Flight of ideas or subjective impression that thoughts are racing
- Decreased need for sleep
- Increased self-esteem; belief that one has special talents, powers, or abilities
- Distractibility; attention easily diverted
- Excessive involvement in activities that are likely to have undesirable consequences, such as reckless speeding, sexual behavior, or driving

For manic episode:

- Symptoms last for 1 week or require hospitalization
- Symptoms cause significant distress or functional impairment

2) Bipolar I Disorder (formerly known as manic-depressive disorder)

Proposed DSM-5 Criteria:

A single episode of mania during the course of a person's life

Diagnosis : Since Hamlet had both an elevated and irritable mood, which was manifested in three symptoms, namely unusual talkativeness, flight of ideas and involvement in activities that are likely to have serious, undesirable consequences, H

Hamlet can be diagnosed as suffering from Bipolar Disorder 1.

Under Anxiety Disorders

1) Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Proposed DSM-5 Criteria:

A. Excessive anxiety and worry at least 50 percent of days about at least two life domains (e.g. family, health, finances, work, and school)

B. The worry is sustained for at least 3 months.

C. The anxiety and worry are associated with at least three of the following:

- Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
- Being easily fatigued
- Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Sleep disturbance

C. The anxiety and worry are associated with marked avoidance of situations in which negative outcomes could occur, marked time and effort preparing for situations that might have a negative outcome, marked procrastination, difficulty making decisions due to worries, or repeatedly seeking reassurance due to worries.

Diagnosis : Although Hamlet worries a lot, he does not avoid situations which cause him worry. He exhibits only two symptoms : restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge.

2) Panic Disorder

Proposed DSM-5 Criteria:

A. Recurrent panic attacks

B. At least 1 month of concern about the possibility of more attacks, worry about the consequences of an attack, or maladaptive behavioral changes because of the attacks.

Diagnosis: Panic attacks are characterized by an intense apprehension, terror, and feelings of impending doom (Kring, Johnson, Davison, Neale, 2012). Although Hamlet may experience panic attacks, he does not worry about the possibility of more attacks. He does not have panic disorder.

Under Trauma-Related Disorders

1) Acute Stress Disorder

Proposed DSM-5 Criteria:

A. The person was exposed to death or threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violation, in one or more of the following ways: experiencing the event personally, witnessing the event, learning that a violent or accidental death or threat of death occurred to a close other, or experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the event(s).

B. At least 8 of the following symptoms began or worsened since the trauma and lasted 3 to 31 days:

- Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event
- Recurrent distressing dreams related to the traumatic event
- Dissociative reactions (e.g. flashbacks) in which the individual feels or acts as if the traumatic event were recurring
- Intense or prolonged psychological distress or physiological reactivity at exposure to reminders of the traumatic event
- Subjective sense of numbing, detachment from others, or reduced responsiveness to events
- Altered sense of the reality of one's surrounding or oneself (e.g. seeing oneself from another's perspective, being in a daze)
- Inability to remember at least one important aspect of the traumatic event
- Avoids internal reminders of the trauma(s)
- Avoids external reminders of the trauma(s)
- Sleep disturbance
- Hypervigilance
- Irritable or aggressive behavior
- Exaggerated startle response
- Agitation or restlessness

Diagnosis: The event experienced by Hamlet that qualifies as traumatic is that of his father's death, and learning who killed him. However, he only manifests three symptoms namely

hypervigilance, irritable or aggressive behavior, and agitation or restlessness. He does not have acute stress disorder.

Under Dissociative Disorders

1) Depersonalization/derealization disorder

Proposed DSM-5 Criteria:

A. Depersonalization: Persistent or recurrent experiences of detachment from one's mental processes or body, as though one is in a dream, despite intact reality testing, or

B. Derealization: Persistent or recurrent experiences of unreality of surroundings

C. Symptoms are not explained by substances, another dissociative disorder, another psychological disorder, or by a medical condition.

Diagnosis: Although Hamlet ventures into discussions about his existence, he does not think that he is detached from his body, or from his surroundings. He does not have depersonalization/derealization disorder.

2) Dissociative Identity Disorder

Proposed DSM-5 Criteria:

A. Disruption or identity characterized two or more personality states (called alters) or an experience of possession, as evidenced by discontinuities in sense of self, cognition, behavior, affect, perceptions, and/or memories. This disruption may be observed by others or reported by the patient.

B. At least two of the alters recurrently take control of behavior.

C. Inability of at least one of the alters to recall important personal information.

D. Symptoms are not part of a broadly accepted cultural or religious practice, and are not due to drugs or a medical condition.

Diagnosis: Hamlet does not have alters. Alters are different identities that characterize a person, and these include different names, personal information, and personalities. When an alter taken over, it is like the person is a different person for now. Although Hamlet recurrently shows different behaviors, he still has the same identity and sense of self. He does not have dissociative identity disorder.

Schizophrenia (under one category)

Proposed DSM-5 Criteria:

A. Two or more of the following symptoms for at least 1 month; one symptom should be either 1, 2, or 3:

1. Delusions
2. Hallucinations
3. Disorganized speech
4. Abnormal psychomotor behavior (e.g. catatonia)
5. Negative symptoms (blunted affect, avolition, asociality)

B. Functioning in work, relationships, or self-care have declined since onset

C. Signs of disorder for at least 6 months; at least 1 month of the symptoms above

Diagnosis: Hamlet does not have delusions, since he does not think that everybody can hear his thoughts nor does he have an exaggerated sense of self. He also does not have

hallucinations, but that depends if he really saw the ghost of his father. He does not show disorganized speech, as he does not have loose associations in his trail of thought nor does he change topic midsentence. He does not show abnormal psychomotor behavior, as he does not exhibit catatonia wherein the person gestures repeatedly using peculiar movements, nor catatonic immobility wherein the person adopts unusual postures and maintains them for very long periods of time. Lastly, he does not have negative symptoms, as he does not exhibit blunted affect, avolition, or asociality. Blunted affect is a lack of outward expression of emotion while actually having the inner experience of the emotion. Hamlet consistently showed his emotions.

Hamlet experiences anger and resentment towards Gertrude and Claudius even before he encounters the Ghost of his father. When Horatio tells hamlet that he has seen the apparition of the late King of Denmark haunting the castle, Hamlet expresses no shock or horror. He is all too eager to meet the Ghost. But Horatio has his own misgivings about the Ghost. He is afraid that the Ghost portends some danger for Hamlet and might lead him to his doom.

What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
And draw you into madness? Think of it
(Hamlet 1.4.50-55).

In fact these turn out to be prophetic words. Hamlet's life indeed begins to dismantle after his encounter with the ghost. The Ghost seems to echo Hamlet's own feelings of hostility towards his uncle when he refers to Claudius as 'that incestuous, that adulterate beast'(Hamlet 1.5.42).

His father's assessment of the character of Claudius seems to justify his own aggressive feelings and hostility towards his uncle. Critics believe that Hamlet's hostility towards his uncle is buried in his unconscious. It is as if Hamlet's first encounter with his father brings to the surface these feelings of hatred and anger towards his uncle to the surface. In a way it is the ghost of his father who leads him to his hellish downfall resulting in his madness. It is the beginning of the end. The tragic conflict that he experiences because of the promise of revenge that he gives to the Ghost of his father ultimately drives him mad.

Murder is unnatural. The murder of Hamlet's father was unnatural. But to avenge murder with murder would be equally unnatural. It would be against the law of Nature. The presence of the Ghost itself is unnatural and disturbing, For Hamlet the Ghost becomes a reminder of the past. It awakens his memories of the past. The Ghost of his father comes to symbolize the Ghosts of his own past which now come to torment his soul. What the Ghost asks of him does not come to him naturally. He cannot commit murder in cold blood.

“O cursed spite/That ever I was born to set it right!” (Hamlet 1.5.189-190)

There is a similarity between the plight of Hamlet and the plight of Orestes. There is a tragic conflict in Orestes between the good and the evil. Orestes does what he considers to be morally right in avenging the murder of his father but in doing so he ends up killing his mother, which is morally wrong. But Orestes does not suffer from twinges of conscience because he believes that the gods are in his favour and therefore he is not guilty. In the case of Hamlet, the matter is not so simple, he gives a promise to his father that he will take revenge. But the idea of killing is abhorrent to him because of the moral code which is deeply embedded in him. He knows it is wrong to kill a man in cold blood even if that man happens to be his treacherous uncle. He experiences what can be called a psychological and spiritual crisis. And it is this crisis which puts him in disharmony with the rest of the world.

Gertrude blames the transformation in Hamlet on the death of his father and her own ensuing over-hasty marriage to Claudius. Polonius attributes this change to his love for Ophelia. It would appear that Hamlet is caught somewhere between his own Oedipal desires and his love for Ophelia. After the revelations made by the Ghost, his Oedipal desires appear to surface and he becomes cold and contemptuous towards Ophelia. The Closet Scene mirrors both his love and contempt for his mother. His disgust for his mother finds expression in his treatment of Ophelia. He cannot see much difference between Gertrude and Ophelia.

"Frailty, thy name is woman" (Hamlet 1.2.146).

It is clear that Gertrude had committed adultery while Hamlet's father was still alive. This makes Hamlet even more vicious and cruel. He ill-treats his mother for this reason. But his cruel treatment of Ophelia is also connected to his hatred for his mother. He hurts and rejects Ophelia in the same way that he thinks that his mother hurt and rejected his father. It would appear that he is using verbal violence to avenge his father by referring to Claudius as his 'uncle-father' and Gertrude as his 'aunt-mother'. Perhaps he is trying to make the idea of murdering his uncle more acceptable to himself. But he hesitates. His sense of morality prevents him from taking immediate action. He attempts to trap and awaken the guilty-conscience of his uncle through the staging of the play, 'The Mouse Trap'. The famous soliloquy 'To be or not to be' reflects Hamlet's moral conflict regarding taking action to avenge the murder of his father. In a way, Hamlet is not just asking himself whether he should live or die, he is also asking himself whether he should or should not avenge his father's murder by killing Claudius. The only way out of this moral dilemma would be taking his own life. Committing suicide would be an ideal solution for his situation. But he rejects the idea of suicide too as death represents the unknown and he has an innate fear of the unknown.

HAMLET AND MELANCHOLY

Apart from exhibiting strong symptoms of real or feigned madness, it is evident in the play that Hamlet is suffering from extreme grief in relation to the death of his father. In other words he is suffering from what has been defined as 'melancholia' by Freud. Freud has outlined certain characteristics of melancholia :

A profoundly painful objection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment” (Mourning and Melancholia”, (1917,14:244). There are several examples of self-loathing and self-reproach in the play.

“O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!” (Hamlet 2.2.552)
“Yet, I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing-no, not for a king
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damned defeat was made. Am I coward?” (Hamlet 2.2.568-573)
“But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall
To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should ‘a’ fatted all the region kites (Hamlet 2.2.579-581).
“Why, what an ass am I? Ay, sure this is most brave,
That I, the son of the dear murdered,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words” (Hamlet 2.2.585-588).

Apart from self-hatred, Hamlet exhibits another marked symptom of severe depression, the loss of capacity to love. There are two major losses that Hamlet suffers from at one go: the loss of his father and the loss of his mother’s love which he believes should be centred only on him and which he has to now share with his uncle Claudius. It is this lack of love or lovelessness which affects his relationship with Ophelia. He does not feel loved and therefore he cannot love anybody, not even Ophelia. According to Freud, depression arises from hostile feelings towards one’s loved ones, especially one’s parents. These repressed hostile feelings are then projected onto other people in the vicinity. This accounts for Hamlet’s cruel treatment of Ophelia.

Ophelia too exhibits the same symptoms of melancholia. She loves her father and she loves Hamlet. She is totally dependant on their reciprocal love for her for survival. Her self-worth is determined only by their approval of her. When her father is killed and Hamlet spurns her in a cruel manner, she loses the centre of her life, the reason to live. And therefore she drowns herself and ends her life.

HAMLET AND HIS GUILTY CONSCIENCE

When Hamlet asks the actors to stage the play, The Mouse Trap’, and thereby re-enact the scene of his father’s murder and bring to the surface the guilt of his uncle Claudius, it is his own way of exhibiting his conscience. He cannot murder Claudius unless and until he is completely sure of his guilt. And when the staging of the play proves to him the guilt of Claudius, Hamlet is unable to kill Claudius even when he gets an opportunity to do so because Claudius is praying. He cannot bring himself to kill Claudius at that moment because

prayer signifies repentance. He would prefer to murder his uncle 'when he is drunk, asleep, or in his rage,/Or in th' incestuous pleasures of his bed,/At gaming, swearing, or about some act/That has no relish of salvation in't' (Hamlet 3.3.89-92).

It would appear from these reflections that Hamlet is indeed is obsessed about the sexual relationship between his mother and his uncle. The fact that he ends up killing Polonius in Gertrude's bed chamber mistaking him for Claudius also points towards his sexual jealousy. It is interesting to note that he suffered from guilty conscience at the thought of killing his uncle, he exhibits no guilt whatsoever over the accidental killing of Polonius. After killing Polonius, he tells his mother, 'Good night- but go not to mine uncle's bed./Assume a virtue if you have it not./Refrain tonight,/And that shall lend a kind of easiness/To the next abstinence' (Hamlet 3.4.150-154). This is further proof his sexual jealousy of the relationship between his mother and his uncle.

The crucial turn around in the action of the play is represented by the killing of Polonius. Before killing Polonius, Hamlet was hesitant about taking the decision to kill his uncle. Does it mean that Hamlet had sensed at an unconscious level that the act of murder would eventually wreak havoc on all those whom he loved and held dear and finally lead to his own destruction? Does it also mean that had he listened to the counsel of Horatio and Marcellous and not followed the Ghost and not carried out it's command, Hamlet's fate would have been different. Or is it that Hamlet was doomed to destroy others as well as himself due to his repressed desires? Was Hamlet capable of committing murder willfully without the interference of the Ghost? Freud's theory of the id, the ego and the superego would suggest that had he not encountered the Ghost, Hamlet would have never committed the act of murder. Hamlet's conflicts arise after meeting the ghost. He hesitates in killing his uncle but he expresses no remorse over the killing of Polonius. It would appear that the first murder makes it easier for him to commit the actual murder. He suffers from no guilty conscience over the killings of Polonius and Laertes. Also, there is a strong link between his repressed sexual desires and his violence. His sexual jealousy of Gertrude and Claudius provides him the impetus to commit murder. In other words his repressed sex instinct brings to the surface his violent instincts. It is only after he murders Polonius that Hamlet is eventually able to kill both Claudius and Laertes. It is interesting to note that he kills them both out of his free will. The only person he does not directly kill is his mother, who dies after drinking the poisoned wine that was meant for Hamlet. He kills Claudius as he himself is dying. And he feels a sense of victory over the deaths of Gertrude and Claudius.

'Here thou incestuous, murd'rous damned Dane,/Drink off this potion. Is thy union here?/Follow my mother' (Hamlet 5.2.277-279).

The revenge tragedy comes a full circle with the deaths of Gertrude and Claudius. Through his own death Hamlet achieves redemption from the hell of pain and violence and he can die in peace with a sense of pride and victory.

HAMLET : APPEARANCE AND REALITY

One of the recurrent motifs in Hamlet is the motif of appearance and reality. Claudius appears to be a good man. Gertrude appears to be virtuous. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern appear to be Hamlet's friends. Hamlet appears to be mad. However, Hamlet is aware of the evil reality underneath the appearance of the good. He tells his friends :

What piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite
in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in
action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the
beauty of the world, the paragon of animals—and yet, to me,
what is this quintessence of dust? (II, ii, 303-8)

In his work. *The World of Hamlet*, Maynard Mack has pointed the significance of assuming, appearing and putting on an act as reflected in the play within the play but most of all, in the characters themselves, in Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia. Laertes, Rosencrantz and Guidenstern and more specifically in Hamlet himself.

The theme of appearance and reality is related to the Freudian concepts of the conscious and unconscious levels of the mind. The human psyche is comparable to the iceberg. What appears on the surface is the conscious layer of the mind. And what lies beneath the surface is the unconscious layer, which dictates the psychological make-up of an individual. If we accept the conflict between appearance and reality to be the central theme of Hamlet, then it follows naturally that the central conflict within Hamlet is between the conscious and unconscious layers of his mind. Hamlet does not have a split personality but there seem to be two selves in him : the conscious self and the unconscious self. According to Freud, the id is buried in the unconscious and the Ego and the Super Ego are in the conscious layer of the human mind. The id is the receptacle of the libido, the sexual energy which is the guiding principle which dictates human action. But the id is controlled by the Ego and the Super Ego, which act as the morality principle to control human behavior.

The Ghost of Hamlet's father appears to be a ghost, but in reality it is actually the Super Ego of Hamlet inciting him to take revenge, to right a moral wrong. The Ghost, in effect, is a projection of Hamlet's conscience. Claudius and Gertrude represent the id which needs to be checked by the ego and the super ego of Hamlet, Hamlet is caught between his id and his super ego. His delay in taking action, in avenging the murder of his father is the direct result of this conflict between his id and his super ego. The first act concludes with Hamlet saying, "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,/That ever I was born to set it right" (I, v, 196-7).

He can agree with Marcellus that "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (I, iv, 90).

When Claudius addresses Hamlet as 'my cousin Hamlet, and my son,' (I, ii, 64), Hamlet replies that he is, 'A little more than kin, and less than kind' (I, ii, 65). Hamlet is indeed more than just the cousin of Claudius, his nephew rather and his son now by marriage to Gertrude. He is also, at the unconscious level, his rival in getting the love and attention of Gertrude.

And therefore he feels less than kind towards him. He certainly cannot feel kindly towards a man who has married his mother so soon after the death of his father.

Several Shakesperean critics such as A. C. Bradley have diagnosed Hamlet's problem to be that of 'melancholy'. Shakespeare's contemporary Robert Burton in his seminal work, *Anatomy Of Melancholy* has described melancholy as a mental state which "embraced everything from raving lunacy to philosophical and occasional pessimism." There are several examples of raving lunacy and philosophical and occasional pessimism in Hamlet.. What then is the cause for this melancholy ? On surface the cause appears to be the death of his father and the over- hasty marriage of Gertrude to Claudius but the actual cause is his id which is buried in his unconscious, his dark sexual desires and fantasies about his mother, which are expressed in the desire to kill his uncle-father and re-possess his aunt-mother. Hamlet's madness is thus expressed not only through his raving lunacy and philosophical and occasional pessimism, it is also expressed as his conscious self conflicting against his unconscious self, his id conflicting with his ego and super ego. Hamlet's life force is his mother but at the conscious level it is substituted by Ophelia. And therefore he treats Ophelia as he would like to treat his mother Gertrude. Polonius opines that there is method in hamlet's madness. Hamlet confides to his mother that he is mad in craft. Hamlet appears to be truly mad when he is controlled by his unconscious id and he seems mad in craft when he is controlled by his super ego.

Hamlet certainly does not exhibit any signs of madness when Horatio, Marcellus and Bernado tell him about the appearance of the ghostly apparition of his father in the castle. Rather he expresses great eagerness to meet the ghost and speak with him. He listens to the terrible revelations made by the ghost without raving and ranting. In fact he shows that he has his wits about him by revealing nothing to his friends about what he has learnt from the ghost. He makes them swear that they will not reveal to anyone what they have seen that night.

With Rosencrantz and Guidenstern . he is very shrewd and cunning. He makes them believe that he has lost his wits when in reality he already knows that they have been appointed as spies upon him.

Hamlet further exhibits his sanity in staging the play , The Murder Of Gonzago, scripting it himself, adding scenes as the mouse trap to catch the mouse, i.e. the conscience of his uncle. He instructs Horatio to watch the reaction of his uncle closely. When Hamlet chooses not to kill his uncle while he is praying, he once again reveals that he is acting by the dictates of his conscience. When he eventually kills Claudius by running his rapier through him and making him drink the same poison that had killed his mother, the act of murder is not an act of madness. It is an act of vengeance, in order to achieve justice for the murder of his father.

THE PROBLEM OF HAMLET

The problem of hamlet, that is, his delay in taking revenge has been the subject of much debate and discussion over the ages. There have been many explanations offered for the

delayed revenge. Psychological illness is just one of them. One explanation is that Hamlet is filled with moral doubt. But this explanation does not totally explain Hamlet's moral dilemma. He does not feel guilty about killing Claudius. He feels more guilty about his own inaction. The ghost merely confirms his own suspicions about his uncle. 'O my prophetic soul: my uncle!' (I.v.40–41). The reaction of Claudius to the play that Hamlet stages to entrap his guilt is further confirmation of the truth about the death of his father. It is not as though Hamlet has any moral scruples about killing Claudius. He is not in the least troubled about causing the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

A common explanation of Hamlet's problem is that he is an extremely unhappy, sensitive, intellectual unable to take practical decisions. It is not unhappiness alone that prevents him from taking action. He is perfectly capable of violence, aggression and murder. He subjects his mother to verbal violence. He is cruel to Ophelia. He kills Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He knows very well what he is supposed to do and he has the means to execute his thoughts into action. On an existential plane, Hamlet is more a man who is unable to bring himself to do what he knows what he must do. Some might say that existential philosophy was unheard of during Shakespeare's time. But then so was psychology. And yet many psychologists have psychoanalysed the character of Hamlet. Some believe that Hamlet is truly mad and not pretending to be mad. Hamlet feigns madness throughout the play. He makes his intentions very clear to his friends about putting on an antic disposition. Shakespeare does not adequately explain why Hamlet pretends to be mad. Perhaps madness gives him the freedom to behave anti-socially. Ernest Jones's psychoanalytic interpretation of the character of Hamlet in light of the Oedipus Complex is one of the explanations. However, Hamlet expresses deep love and admiration for his father throughout the play, He is disgusted by what his mother has done like any other young man of his age. The doubt that he experiences, the indecisiveness that he exhibits could be like that of any young man caught in a nightmarish situation, who hesitates before taking the final step

In the final act of the play, we see a very different Hamlet when he returns from his exile. His emotional turmoil is replaced by a cool perspective and a rational acceptance of his destiny. He has realized that it is his destiny to kill Claudius.

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

Perhaps he is justifying the murder that he is about to commit to himself. It's a way of emotionally and morally distancing himself from the situation. The complexity of Hamlet has baffled critics over the centuries and will continue to do so. At a time when his contemporaries were content with creating two-dimensional characters, Shakespeare created a character with profound psychological depth. And it is a truly remarkable feat Hamlet remains till date 'the greatest riddle of all', as Maynard Mack puts it in the most significant chapter entitled "The Readiness is All" in his work *Everybody's Shakespeare*. Maynard Mack asserts that the problem of Hamlet is not one which can be solved by finding the clue

to the puzzle. At some point , Hamlet's problem ceases to be his problem and becomes everybody's problem.

Hamlet's final words to Horatio before he enters into a sword war with Laertes represent the final resolution of his inner conflict, his acceptance of his fate

‘There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet will it come—the readiness is all. Since no man, of aught he leaves, knows what is't to leave betimes, let be." *Hamlet* 5.2.202–6.

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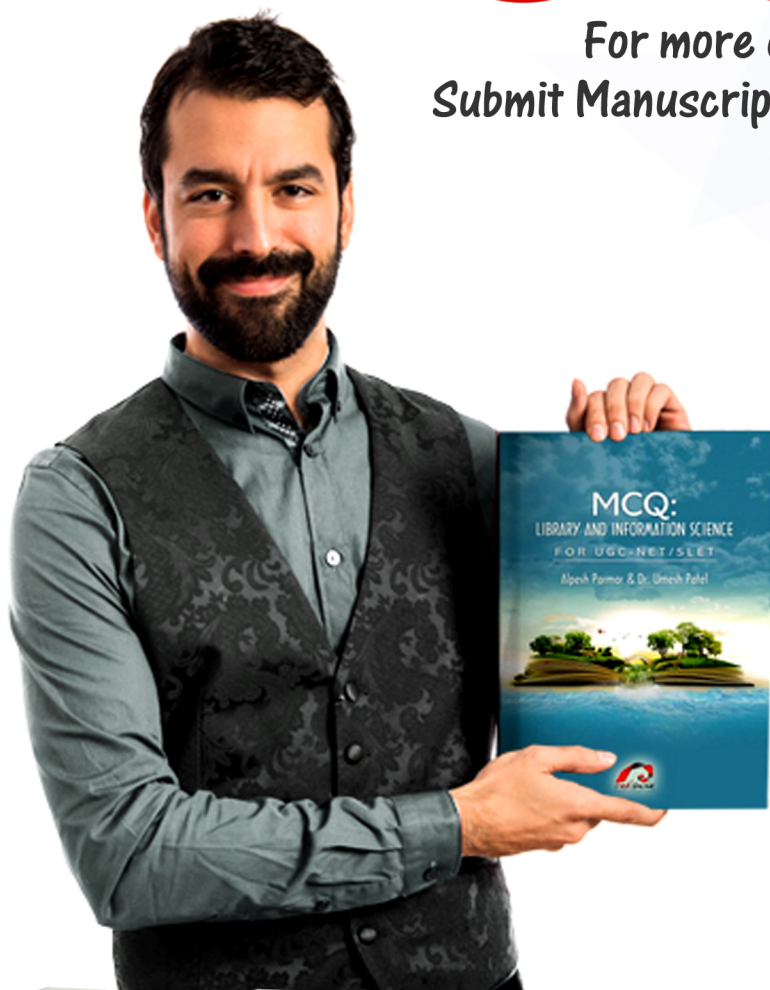
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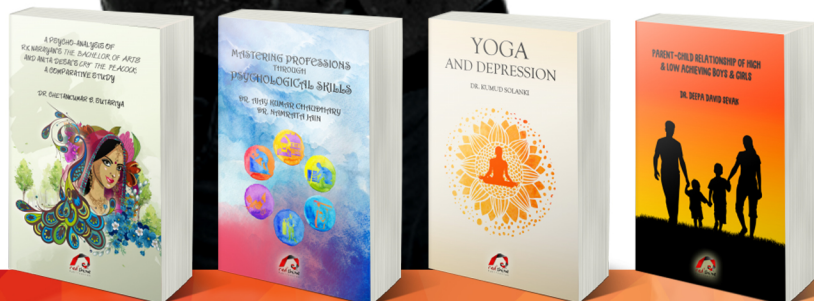
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